

JOHN EDWARDS

Promoting Strong Families

Senator John Edwards knows that being a parent is harder than ever. Today, 70 percent of kids do not have a stay-at-home parent, and parents now have 22 hours less to spend with their children every week than they did in 1969. While parents have responsibility for raising children, Senator Edwards believes the government can lend parents a hand. His proposals would help parents, offering them an opportunity to spend more time with their children, and helping parents instill strong values in our children.

Giving Parents More Choices At Work

Assisting Parents Get the Help They Need: While the Family and Medical Leave Act gives two-thirds of Americans unpaid leave when a new child is born, many American cannot afford to take unpaid leave. Yet the danger with requiring paid leave is hurting small businesses and costing jobs. Senator Edwards has proposed a \$2,500 family leave tax credit, phased in over a period of years, that will effectively provide paid leave without hurting businesses. This credit, offered to the working parents of newborns as a refundable tax credit, would benefit about 3.5 million families a year. For families with newborns, the proposal would more than double the existing child tax credit, and like the existing credit, the proposal would phase out for families earning more than \$110,000.

Expanding Family Leave: While the Family and Medical Leave Act helps many families each year, it is too limited in its scope. Parents of newborns should be able to take unpaid leave on a part-time basis, provided they establish a real schedule with their businesses. Senator Edwards would also give parents unpaid leave for parent-teacher conferences and would guarantee some form of unpaid leave to millions of workers at small businesses who get nothing now.

Doubling Support for Elder Care: Edwards would help the growing number of working parents who are responsible for their own parents' or spouses' care by doubling federal support for respite care and adult day care.

Encouraging Model Businesses: Many businesses are proving that a company can be family and worker-friendly and still turn a profit. Edwards supports creating a new award to recognize excellence in family-friendly policies, as a way to encourage the business community to honor companies that are good to their employees.

Offering Quality After-School Opportunities

Offering High-Quality After-school Programs for Every Child Who Needs One: Edwards believes that with more and more parents working, children need quality after-school programs to help them learn more and stay out of trouble. He supports offering a quality program to every child whose parent needs one. The initiative, phased in over time, would be run through the states, with two requirements: providing opportunities at or near every school, and making the opportunities high-quality. Edwards opposed the Bush administration's efforts to cut 500,000 after-school slots, and believes we should determine which programs work best and promote those programs.

Supporting Parents' Values

Encouraging Community Service: Edwards' proposal would help high schools require community service as a condition of graduation. Not all education takes place in the classroom--community service is one of the best ways to encourage our young people to get new experiences and become more involved in their communities.

Fighting Alcohol Industry Advertising that Undermines Values: Teen drinking is a serious problem, yet the alcohol industry spends millions of dollars each year on TV and magazine ads aimed at children. Edwards has called on the alcohol industry to make stronger voluntary guidelines in order to prevent targeting children. If this does not occur, Edwards would require the industry to change its practices.

Making The Internet a Friendlier Place for Children: Edwards believes we must stop junk mail on the internet. Today, providers use fake names to escape detection and make pornography available to our children. We should pass a law blocking this sort of fraud.

Encouraging Responsible Parents

Encouraging Responsibility from Dads: While moms on welfare are required to work, and they get help in finding it, dads have neither help nor the requirement. In order to give fathers better means to support their children and be valued members of their family and their community, we should require fathers to work, give them help finding work, and make sure child support goes to the parent, and not the government.

Fighting Teen Pregnancy: While the rate of teen pregnancy has dropped, there are still about half a million teen births a year. Edwards believes we must support successful teen pregnancy prevention programs, and support a national media campaign against teen pregnancy.